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THE MAGAZINE OF THE SOCIETY FOR TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION

TECHNICAL EDITING

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A VIEW OF TECHNICAL EDITING THROUGH TOOLS AND TECHNOLOGIES OF THE PAST | TECHNICAL EDITING TODAY

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A Note from the Editor

I'm pleased our May/June edition features a special issue on technical editing, guest edited by Kelly Schrank, a.k.a. Head Bookworm, who shares her 30 years of expertise and insights on editing. This special issue includes articles that span both the past and present state of technical editing from a variety of perspectives. You can also learn all about STC's Technical Editing Special Interest Group in this month's feature. And whether you're interested in learning all about the skillsets of technical editing, what technical editors do in their day-to-day work, what technologies and trends have influenced the field, or more about the state of technical editing today, this issue is certain to leave you agog.

A special congratulations goes out to all of our award winners who were recognized at our 2023 STC Summit in Atlanta. This issue features a complete list of this year's honorees and their accomplishments. Be sure to offer your congratulations to them as well!

As STC continues to celebrate its 70th anniversary throughout the year, there will be many more featured events, speakers, webinars, and content coming to you soon. In future issues, look for more information and updates from our 70th Anniversary Committee and Chair, Nicky Bleiel. Also, some of these features will offer a look back through our historical repository of photos from past STC milestones.

If you're interested in writing an article or column, we'd love to hear from you. Upcoming topics include soft skills, information visualization, and project planning for technical communicators. We welcome your contributions on these topics as well as any others that allow you to share your expertise and knowledge in technical communication with our readers. Feel free to send your submission any time to us at intercom-editor@stc.org. ■

Dr. Craig Baehr
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Note from the Guest Editor

BY KELLY SCHRANK | *Associate Fellow*

I am so excited to be the Guest Editor for this special issue on Technical Editing. The last issue that I could find in the archives having technical editing as a focus was in July/August 2017. So it's long overdue!

When I first proposed this issue in mid-2022, I had two groups of articles in mind. The first group would have an article on how to become an editor, what does an editor do/why have one on your team, and then a wildcard (something interesting or unexpected). And the second group would cover the past, present, and future of technical editing. Many of these articles have come to fruition, but others have unexpectedly not.

For the articles in the first group, I recruited two knowledgeable and experienced editors to gather wisdom from our profession about how to become an editor and what editors do. Linda and Sherri have provided interesting overviews of how people come into this profession and what people do once here. I appreciate the insight from them and their networks. While those two articles came into being easily from my perspective, my wildcard did not materialize. So, two out of three ain't bad, right?

In the second group, I had a similar level of success. For the past, Paula has researched the history from editing's beginnings to 2010, providing an interesting perspective on our history up until the recent past. I have surveyed and spoken to my peers about what they are doing now, in an attempt to give people a view of what technical editors are doing in the present. Which leaves us with the future. Much has changed since the summer of 2022. Our vision for the future has changed in 2023 with the advent of ChatGPT, which has dominated conversations of how artificial intelligence (AI) will steal everyone's job in every industry, including ours.

What I am hearing so far (consider this a snapshot in time) is that editors will still be needed because AI-generated content needs to be fact checked because what it puts together *reads* well, but the accuracy of the content and transparency of the data cannot be trusted. Adrienne Montgomerie, a science editor who has been playing around with ChatGPT, has other ideas for how editors might fit into the process: she thinks technical editors of the future may find themselves running prompts in AI to help us edit, and that those who don't want to keep up with the technology will retire or move out of technical editing. She likened it to early in her career when Word with track changes was coming into workplaces; those skilled in editing on paper who did not want to learn and adapt to the new technologies retired. With that said, it seemed premature to dive into what all these changes will mean given how much has changed from the media frenzy around ChatGPT at the beginning of the year to the continuing conversations around the technologies incorporating generative AI and the new version (GPT-4) before I sent this off for publication in March.

As often happens with these types of projects, not everything goes as planned, but some of my plans worked out, and for that, I have many folks to thank! I want to thank all the contributors, who quickly and enthusiastically said yes to my request for an article and then spent countless hours talking to their networks; poring over books, articles, and surveys; and synthesizing the information into interesting, helpful, and relevant content for this issue! And a huge thank you from the contributors and from me, to all of those who stepped up to fill out surveys and have conversations with contributors to inform all the articles in this issue! This issue would not have come together without the participation of everyone involved. ■

What Do Technical Editors Do?

By Sherri Leah Henkin | Senior Member

Explore the levels of edit, activities, and roles that technical editors fulfill in their day-to-day life.

Though it may seem otherwise at times, technical editors and writers are on the same team. Writers focus on creating the content and cannot realistically be an objective reviewer of their own work. The technical editor acts as an extra set of eyes on the documentation, with the goal of helping the writer meet the requirements for the document/content. A technical editor matches the writer's piece to the writing standards of the company and makes sure the content adheres to company and/or external style guides and to industry standards (Henkin, 2022).

A technical editor may also help craft the content into something better and more nuanced. In doing so, technical editors enhance and elevate the quality of the writers' content. Ann Marie Queeney, a technical editor in healthcare in the US, believes the editor partners with the writer to "create a clear, concise document that addresses the company's requirements and any industry regulations."

Specific tasks that the technical editor performs vary depending on the content, team size, purpose of the content, and other factors. There's theory and practice. To get a sense of how the theory translates into practice, I connected with technical editors and managers of technical editors in the US, UK, and India. Interviewees described common roles, skills, and the types of edits they do.

What is the Role of a Technical Editor?

A technical editor can play several roles; respondents describe their roles from many perspectives.

"In a nutshell, technical editors are responsible for the quality of information. This is actually a triple responsibility—to the reader, the writer, and the client or organization they work for." (Winninger)

As Christina M., a technical editor in the US notes, "Technical editors improve readability, by making sure the content has a consistent voice, tone, style, and format." When the format is consistent, readers can easily find glossaries, citations, and common headings. Technical editors may also be the go-to resource for word usage, company style, and design.

Matthew Pitman, a technical editor in the UK for Sitecore, shares that he focuses on content and provides "technical oversight to ensure that user journeys are properly captured and are understandable to the intended reader."

A technical editor in India adds that her role "is to fine tune and polish content while also enforcing the guidelines of the company style guide, ensuring completeness and consistency, confirming that the content caters to the target audience, and keeping content error free grammatically."

In supporting a team of writers, the technical editor may provide feedback/suggestions or direct edits, or a combination. Li-At Rathbun, a technical editor in the US for Yardi Systems considers her role "to be general support to our content contributors—specifically, to our technical writers…I provide editorial oversight and guidance in various degrees to about 40 official Docs content contributors."

"Technical editing "is actually a triple responsibility—to the reader, the writer, and the client or organization they work for."

Technical editors also educate the writers so that they can learn the company guidelines and incorporate those in future writing projects. According to Yvonne Kucher, a technical editor in the US for Eagle Eyes Editing and Proofreading, her "job is to educate the writers" so that their content meets company and external requirements. Education ranges from providing feedback to running workshops. Marcia Riefer Johnston, who does technical editing in her Senior Technical Writer role at Amazon Web Services in the US elaborates: "I help others at the company build their own writing and editing skills. For example, when I edit, I often include comments to help authors understand why I did what I did so that they can expand their own skills. I've also given workshops to user-experience designers and software developers at my company."

Natasha Baker, a technical editor in the UK for Google (via Harvey Nash, a digital services consultancy) summarized the variety of roles this way: "Often we do so many 'jobs' that you could say 'Technical Editor/ Technical Writer' is not an accurate job title! We are creators, innovators, teachers, developers, all in one!"

What is the Skill Set?

"A good editor has the ability to evaluate the big picture as well as the fine details and can play a key role on documentation projects." (Winninger) To do this, interviewees outlined these common technical skills:

- excellent English
- strong knowledge of spelling and grammar rules
- attention to detail/eye for consistency
- excellent writing
- style guide expertise (company-specific and external, such as *Chicago Manual of Style*)
- familiarity with company products and related technical information

For technical editors who work in regulated industries, Ann Marie adds that "you don't need to be an expert, but a general knowledge facilitates a broader understanding of the content you are editing and its importance to your company."

Technical editors also need soft skills, such as diplomacy and tact. As Lisa Adair, Content Operations, Lead in the US for Rockwell Automation, Inc. explains: "It's important to have the idea that they're editing for other professional writers who have a similar background and experience. In some cases, we were editing content for writers with many more years of experience. We weren't better writers than them—we were simply editing to our style rules so that our company's content sounded like it came from one entity."

Respondents described other soft skills. Technical editors need to be flexible, thorough, creative, and personable. They must pay attention to the details, have a willingness to learn new technology, and exhibit critical thinking and analysis.

What are the Levels of Edits?

Documentation format and even the content has evolved from hard-copy documents to online formats. Technical editors may edit website content, online manuals/instructions, or micro-content, as examples. And content has expanded to include video scripts for tutorial videos, test processes, blog posts, or online release notes. If the content has words, technical editors can be called upon to edit it!

> **"'Technical Editor/Technical Writer' is not an accurate job title! We are creators, innovators, teachers, developers, all in one."**

There could be several rounds of editing, each with a specific purpose. *Technical Communication Today* outlines four levels of editing (Johnson-Sheehan, 2015).

- **Level 1—Revising**. In this initial level, the editor and writer evaluate the breadth of the subject, determine if the content achieves the purpose, serves the intended audience, and fits the intended context.
- **Level 2—Substantive editing**. Also known as developmental editing, this level is an in-depth edit of each section, to make sure the design and layout support the way the content is organized. Each of the components should add to readability.
    - Li-At offers that she can partner with the writer in "evaluating a section they're having challenges with. For example, I might look at a challenging concept (or written paragraph) and help the writer evaluate if the information would be better as a table or list." As part of this stage, she may also point out sections of the content to the writer "where they deviate from our preferred language, don't use parallel phrasing (in a list), or have murky sentences or other elements that might limit the users' comprehension."

- **Level 3—Copyediting**. In this level, technical editors review layout, heading styles, and graphics, and look for factual correctness. They edit at the sentence and paragraph level, to make sure that each statement supports the subject.
    - Marcia revises "for clarity, conciseness, accuracy, grammatical correctness, consistency, and adherence to corporate style." She makes sure headings "let readers know instantly what type of content they'll find in a given section."
- **Level 4—Proofreading**. In this level, technical editors review grammar; punctuation; spelling; acronyms; proprietary names; word usage; and the format of dashes, bullets, and tables. They also eliminate errors and incorrect terms. Proofreading is the last chance to make sure the entire piece has consistent format and style (Henkin, 2017).
    - Rachel Musicante, a proofreader in the US for The Rohr Jewish Learning Institute may perform two levels of proofreading, depending on the author's request: A basic level (checking the content for spelling mistakes, grammar errors, and consistent language use) and a second level where she will "check for gender-neutral language, flag citation issues, and look out for content that might trigger audience sensitivities."

Are all Projects Created Equal?

Based on the interviewees' responses, no. Editing levels ranged from a single editor performing all tasks to a team conducting the edits. In some cases, all stages are done at once. As one respondent put it, "We generally didn't have time for deeper content development edits."

The best scenarios are when the project plan includes time for each type of edit. Editors may include notes within the document. The document is returned to the writer for review and further edits. In Matthew's company, there are iterations with the writer. An editor might return the content to the writer asking for clarifications, and then the editor will review and edit the changes.

Other editors conduct collaborative sessions between the writer(s) and editor to explain the changes requested, understand the writer's intention, or determine what enhancements are needed to the content (such as graphics).

- Ann Marie reviews "the document for clarity, completeness (of instructions), grammar, relationship to other documents and forms (if used), and conformance to company requirements and government regulations." Then she copyedits, reviewing for "consistency (terms, job titles, and so on), spelling, confirmation that appendices, other documents, tables, and other items referenced, actually exist."
- Marcia helps "align our content with legal requirements, such as treating our company's product and service names properly."

In some cases, companies added automated editing/terminology tools such as Acrolinx to assist with editing. Lisa describes how Acrolinx changed their editing process. "Writers now run Acrolinx checks on their content before any review and make the corrections themselves. Before the final review, they send their publication for a quality review. This quality review is completed by managers who base their reviews off a checklist of items that Acrolinx cannot check for—like headers or footers or proper placement of logos, tables of contents, warning statements, etc."

Why Include a Technical Editor on the Team?

A technical editor brings specific skills that enhance the writing team. Having a technical editor on the team:

- Adds accuracy, consistency, and clarity, and builds a stronger writing team (Henkin, 2022).
- Enhances the professional image of the company/client (Henkin, 2022).
- Saves the organization time and money. With updated and easily understood content, this can reduce calls to the call center for instructions (Henkin, 2022).
- Cuts work interruptions and increases employee safety (Ann Marie).

As Christine Christiansen, a technical communication manager in the US, says, "The value that [a technical editor] brings is that we publish better content. It's well thought out, it's consistent, and it meets the needs of our customers."

Ann Marie adds that "when I edit in a regulated environment, I am facilitating compliance to regulations and standards and successful audits."

The Last Word

As Marcia Riefer Johnston sums up: "In the editor role, I'm basically an information midwife. I aim to help authors deliver their creations—blog posts, deployment guides, slide decks, proposals, and more—in a way that makes the authors and the people they care about (the customers) happy." ■

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SHERRI LEAH HENKIN (sherrilhenkin@gmail.com) has worked in tech comm for 20+ years, honing her skills through on-the-job boot camps. As a technical editor, Sherri collaborates with her teams to produce error-free and user-friendly procedures, work instructions, and user guides.

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So You Want to Be a Technical Editor?

By Linda Oestreich | Fellow

Education, passion, hard skills, soft skills: do you have what it takes to be a technical editor?

After spending almost a half century working in technical communications, I look back and realize that I edited more than I wrote. I had many titles at many different jobs over the years, but whether I was called a writer, an editor, a lead, or a manager, I edited. That means I've been a technical editor for a long time, making me qualified to share how I think *you* can become a technical editor. Let's get started.

What is a Technical Editor?

A Google search for "technical editor" brought up a simple and succinct definition:

"Technical editors proofread, revise, and edit technical information in the work of technical writers. Technical editors will go over writing pieces for clarity, punctuation, grammar, and content. They may also write their own materials, design graphics and layout, maintain websites, and develop web content." (Betterteam, n.d.)

> **Many of us are true "word nerds" and love all aspects of reading, writing, language, and learning.**

The well-known, dog-eared, 12-year-old text, *Technical Editing* (Rude, 2011), offers the still-relevant definition: "Editors today are information designers. They often advise writers about the best choices for content, organization, and visual design. They are aware of audience and purpose—just as writers must be. They help prepare documents for publication, both in print and online. Basic copyediting, making the document correct and consistent, is just one of many editorial tasks."

Any definition, whether current or old, incorporates most of what is included within these definitions. In short, as stated by Dr. Judy Glick-Smith, in response to a survey I recently distributed (Oestreich, Providing Information for Intercom Article on Becoming a Technical Editor, 2023): "Technical editors make technical communication better by ensuring consistency, accuracy, adherence to standards, and readability."

Now that we've defined the job, let's see what it takes to prepare for it.

How Can You Prepare to be a Technical Editor?

Traits

Technical editing, like technical writing, can have multiple entry points. A fairly consistent comment from those in the field is that most technical editors have at one time or another been a technical writer. It's true that editors and writers often have "typical" traits, but the traits are flexible and many of us straddle the differences! Here's a chart from a workshop of mine (Oestreich, Basically, It's Technical Editing, 2021):

Typical editor traits	Typical writer traits
• Generalist	• Specialist
• Wide focus ("forest")	• Narrow focus ("trees")
• Short project cycles	• Long project cycles
• Multiple projects	• One project at a time
• General familiarity with many products or services	• Intimate familiarity with a few products or services
• Likes stability	• Likes "cutting edge"
• Works easily with people	• Works easily alone

You don't have to be wonderful at all of these, but most likely, if you become an editor, you'll feel more comfortable with the list on the left.

Education Needs

Naturally, to be a technical editor, you need some education. The consensus among practicing technical writer/editors is that a 4-year degree is almost mandatory. Degrees in technical communication abound, and they can be your first choice if you know that's your path. But if you take a more circuitous route, that 4-year degree can be in any field of study where you hope to edit such as science, information

development, healthcare, or cybersecurity, combined with a college minor or a certificate in technical communications, English, or similar field. The combinations you put together are almost endless. My education was planned knowing that I was to be a technical writer/editor. At that time, my city had no technical communication degree programs. My counselors and I put together an English Literature major with two minors: Creative Writing and Scientific Perspectives (a unique minor of many basic science classes that taught concepts and terminology). That combo served me well throughout my career.

Passion

I also believe that you need talent and a strong passion for what you do. Many of us are true "word nerds" and love all aspects of reading, writing, language, and learning. If you embrace technical editing because you love doing it, you'll excel. Ways to find out if it's for you include writing and editing for newsletters, trade magazines, and anything else you can find. If you have a passion for a particular field, attend professional meetings, join LinkedIn, and find a way to network with those already in the field. All these things help you prepare to be a technical editor.

What Hard Skills Do You Need?

Hard skills are objective, quantifiable skills gained through training, school, or work experiences. Hard skills are things we often think of as tools and technology. Hard skills can change from industry to industry, team to team. Some companies and teams believe that a good editor only needs a strong foundation in writing and editing and the technology can be taught. Some believe that too much hard-skill knowledge gets in the way of the technical editor being a good representative of the client or reader. Others want those editors to have almost as much knowledge as their subject matter experts (SMEs). It depends.

In general, here are some hard skills that might be required to have a successful technical editing career. (Tarutz, 1992) (Oestreich, Providing Information for Intercom Article on Becoming a Technical Editor, 2023) (Murphy, 2010) :

- Excellent writing skills
- Information design
- Graphics art knowledge
- Project management skills & tools
- Time management skills
- Electronic publishing tools
- Editorial software
- Knowledge of MS Office and other writing tools
- Content development tools
- Hardcore understanding of mechanics and usage
- Tools and platforms used to house content at your company
- Knowledge of field in which you edit: terminology, basic concepts, etc.
- Change management tools
- Localization/globalization rules for content
- CMS/HTML coding

What Soft Skills Do You Need?

Soft skills are the types of things that are difficult to learn or change; they are the non-technical skills that describe how you work and interact with others. If you try to change a personality trait, you can, but it isn't easy. Successful technical editors exhibit certain soft skills (some noted in previous chart) that can be honed and changed by practice, but some cannot. Here are some soft skills you might find useful. (Tarutz, 1992) (Oestreich, Providing Information for Intercom Article on Becoming a Technical Editor, 2023) (Murphy, 2010) They reflect the traits shown earlier in the comparison chart with writer traits.

- Listening
- Patience
- Attention to detail
- Kindness
- Excellent verbal skills
- Friendly demeanor

- Flexibility
- Able to maintain focus
- Multitasking ability
- Inquisitiveness
- Analytical thinking
- Decisiveness
- Negotiation skills
- Diplomacy & tack
- Quick learner
- Empathy
- Restraint
- Good judgment
- Adaptability
- Persuasion
- Superb sensitivity to language and communication

The list is long, but you get the idea. Technical editing seems more about working with people than it is about editing!

Does the World Need Technical Editors?

Now that you've looked at some areas about technical editing and still think you'd like to make it your career, an important question is: Will you be able to find work?

Companies' Needs and Quality Assurance

You can read books, peruse texts, and become an STC Certified Professional Technical Communicator (Certification Overview: Validate Your Knowledge with Professional Certification) to enhance your resume and provide those hiring managers and human resources departments with reasons to hire you. But know that technical communication—writing and editing—is usually an ancillary aspect of a company. If the company builds widgets, having good documentation is part of that widget, but the documentation departments seldom get the credit they deserve.

That means you have to love what you do and continually prove that what you offer helps your company's bottom line. Many articles have focused on the concept of quality assurance being a significant aspect of technical editing. (Corbin, 2002) (Oestreich, Technical Editing: the Foundation of a Quality Product, 2020) Showing how technical editing is quality assurance is a brilliant way to support your craft and convince your employers that what you do is directly related to success of the company.

Technical Editing Happens Everywhere

Another thing to realize about technical editing is that it's a part of everything produced in technical communication. Just because you don't have an official title of technical editor doesn't mean you won't edit! Writers edit their own work. Writers do peer editing. Documentation team leads edit work for their teams, and managers often fill in as editors for even larger groups. It's unlikely that one would ever be part of a technical communication team and NOT have some responsibility for editing.

Saul Carliner created a recent survey and gathered data on our profession. (Carliner & Chen, 2019) In it, he asked the question "what is your current job role?" Out of 654 responses, 241 stated that they were writer/editors (the largest group). Only 23 said they were a dedicated editor. Those two categories made up about 40% of all respondents. If you add the 161 folks who identified themselves as writer only (because we know they also edit!), that percentage jumps to about 65%. Technical editing is a need that isn't going away.

No matter if the person is a dedicated editor or not, the technical editor sometimes has the final word on how to clarify and fix a document. But, in reality, the SME or writer usually "owns" the document. That ownership comes with a responsibility to make decisions about when and what to edit. That's why it's so important for good editors to have excellent people skills: it's the editor who must convince the SMEs/writers what's most important to serve the audience. Editors must please not only the audience, but also the writers/SMEs of the work. Those folks must be convinced to make edits that can change the content and impact of a document, whether that document is on paper, on a computer, or on a webpage.

Wrap-up Words of Optimism

By now, you should have an idea if you want to be a technical editor and what you need to do if you're not yet on that path. So far, we've looked at what technical editing is, the tools and technologies you need, the hard and soft skills required to do it well, its need in the workplace, and the future for the profession.

> **"I get a sense of joy and accomplishment making technical content readable and accessible for the appropriate audience(s)."**

Let's end with some words of optimism from folks who do it (Oestreich, Providing Information for Intercom Article on Becoming a Technical Editor, 2023):

- My job satisfaction was highest when I got to do technical editing. Technical editing let me bring my love of language (and words) and my innate curiosity together with my love of teaching (I was going to be an English teacher originally) [sic] together.
- I enjoy technical editing, especially if I can trust the content to be true and I have knowledgeable SMEs to work with. I get a sense of joy and accomplishment making technical content readable and accessible for the appropriate audience(s).
- I do enjoy technical editing, especially when working with SMEs who are NOT necessarily writers. I have had authors who have thanked me for making their work better, really appreciative of my help.
- I enjoy working with words that help people do their jobs better or inspire/empower them. I enjoy working with the details yet seeing the big picture.

And from one of our past giants, my own mentor, Lola Zook (past STC President and Fellow): "...editing is not just a technique for stating things more simply or more directly or more clearly, although that is often what it does. In skilled hands, editing is something done with sophistication and discrimination and grace." (Zook, 1975)

As a technical editor, you, too, can strive for sophistication and discrimination and grace. ■

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A View of Technical Editing Through Tools and Technologies of the Past

By Paula Robertson | Associate Fellow

An interpretation of technical editing history drawn from interviews, discussions, and reference material

Defining the Past

To state the obvious, "the past" is a very long time. To define a historical scope for the past of technical editing—the persons, the practice, the profession—one must not only decide, When did the past "end" as time became the present?, but also ask, When did the past begin?

Factual narratives about the history of editing—separate from writing—are few. As of 1961, Clarke stated, "Not much has been written about the history of technical editing at all." Even now, I found that it's more fruitful, certainly less frustrating, to trace the history and impact of editing *tools and technology*. As Pringle and Williams state, "technical communication has always resided with technology" (2005).

Movable Type

This story begins with book publishing in early modern, 15th-century Europe. While an improvement over books printed from single-page blocks, the technology and speed of movable type production allowed for more human error. The accelerated pace resulted in errors from typesetters mis-setting type under increased pressure.

What's more, for technical or scientific material, printers and authors could not expect accuracy unless someone with specialized subject-matter knowledge reviewed and corrected the material. Printers began to hire freelance scholars to correct books before mass publication. Some say that these specialists, hired for their scientific or language expertise, were forerunners of technical editors.

Style Guides and Proofreaders Marks

Fast-forward to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, when printers began to create lists of items for authors, reviewers, and printers alike to check for consistency. These lists expanded and evolved into what we know today as style guides. The common understanding of an editor was the journalism model of newspaper editors, which we might say spawned the embryo of the notion of technical editing.

In the 1940s, a system of communication was developed—a set of proofreading marks—that became the standard shorthand among editors, authors, and printers for as long as handwritten markup survived. This common language of symbols communicated insertions, deletions, formatting changes, and comments to all involved in the process.

20th Century Overview

Before moving ahead, I want to provide a digest version of technical editing in the 20th century, based on an account in *New Perspectives on Technical Editing* (Murphy, 2010). In the chapter, "History and Trends in Technical Editing," Thomas L. Warren offers his account of the history of technical editing based on literature review. He lays out "three indistinct periods of editing history," which he called the Beginning, Middle, and Modern Periods as shown in Figure 1.

Certain aspects in the content seemed to lend themselves to a graphical comparison, which visually oriented learners like me might appreciate. Figure 1 is a compilation of my takeaways from Warren's chapter; it shows parallels and progressions of selected trends in editing or editors from one period to the next.

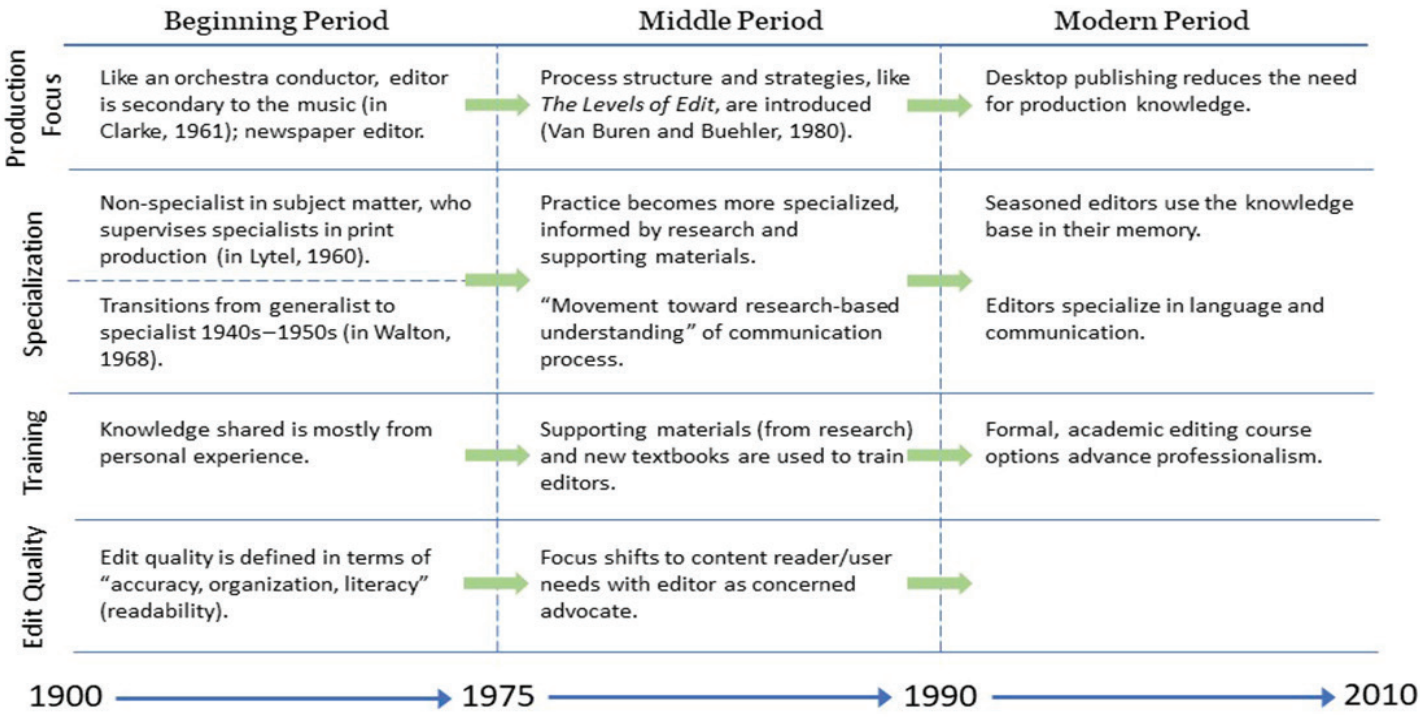
Beginning Period
Middle Period
Modern Period
Production Focus
Like an orchestra conductor, editor is secondary to the music (in Clarke, 1961); newspaper editor.
Process structure and strategies, like *The Levels of Edit*, are introduced (Van Buren and Buehler, 1980).
Desktop publishing reduces the need for production knowledge.
Specialization
Non-specialist in subject matter, who supervises specialists in print production (in Lytel, 1960).
Transitions from generalist to specialist 1940s–1950s (in Walton, 1968).
Practice becomes more specialized, informed by research and supporting materials.
"Movement toward research-based understanding" of communication process.
Seasoned editors use the knowledge base in their memory.
Editors specialize in language and communication.
Training
Knowledge shared is mostly from personal experience.
Supporting materials (from research) and new textbooks are used to train editors.
Formal, academic editing course options advance professionalism.
Edit Quality
Edit quality is defined in terms of "accuracy, organization, literacy" (readability).
Focus shifts to content reader/user needs with editor as concerned advocate.
1900
1975
1990
2010

Figure 1. Takeaways from "History and Trends in Technical Editing" (Warren, 2010).

The Beginning Period could be broken into a period leading up to World War II and the period between World War II and 1975. So the horizontal dashed line in the second row of that column indicates movement from the journalism model of an editor to more of what *we* know as technical editor in specialization, training, and edit focus. The rest of this article bears out and expands on this timeline.

Professional Advancement Spurred by World Disruption

In the first half of the 20th century, world war was the most significant catalyst for advancements in science and technology. Accordingly, "World War II spurred the growth and recognition of technical communication as an occupation…" (Malone, 2020). "Technical writing became recognized as a job title, if not a profession, during World War II, as the technology and logistics of battle became complicated and required standardized procedures, definitions, descriptions, instructions, and training" (O'Hara, 2001).

But by the late 1950s, academic training for the job of technical editing was still almost non-existent. Professional editors usually had college degrees in engineering or another science, English, or journalism, or a combination of both.

In the textbook, *Technical Editing: An Introduction to Editing in the Workplace*, Edward A. Malone (2020) states, "Editors in the '50s and '60s typically edited reports written by content specialists for other content specialists or manuals for nonexpert users, but the focus was not on the needs of the reader." Technical communication publications recorded authoritative personal experiences and "how-to" explanations from editors' practical work, which were a valuable source of training for others, not unlike textbooks and on-the-job training. Results of a 1968 questionnaire showed a diversification of editing roles and role types. However, the task of the editor remained similar to or was thought of as that of a newspaper editor.

Professional Organizations

In 1953, two technical communication organizations formed independently in the U.S. They merged in 1957. That organization joined with another like organization in 1960 and in 1971 became the Society for Technical Communication (STC), a community of academics and practitioners dedicated to advancement of the field of technical communication.

Spell Check and Levels of Edit

In 1979, IBM was granted a patent for a "system for automatically proofreading a document" (Malone, 2020), one of the first spell checkers for a word processing application. However, it would be a while before word processing tools became ubiquitous. Editing was still done on paper.

In 1980, Van Buren and Buehler released *The Levels of Edit*, which they developed for the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) at the California Institute of Technology. This 26-page plan introduced strategy and structure into editors' work. *The Levels of Edit* became the basis of editing education and raised the professional status of technical editors as producers of valuable, tangible customer products.

Electronic Editing

In 1980, a major development for the field of technical editing was the first word processor, Scribe, which allowed editing and formatting in a markup environment. Then the mass-marketed personal computer spawned the technological leap to desktop publishing. Needless to say, editors began the transition from paper to electronic editing. For some of us, the transition from print to electronic content delivery was a slow one; we were still marking up hard copy in the 1990s.

In terms of editing education, publications related to technical editing became more frequent and marked a move toward a research-based understanding of communication as a process. However, course textbooks for technical editing were few. Available texts about editing were still targeted to journalists.

In 1986, Microsoft introduced "redlining" in Word 3.1.1. In 1987, this capability was improved to "Marked Revisions," which got the attention of more editors. In 1997, the feature was renamed "Track Changes" as we know it today (Malone).

The needs of the reader became a prime consideration as editors took on the role of reader advocate. Editors began to specialize in different areas of technical editing or different editing roles. In 1986, the first listservs (email groups) provided community and access to first-hand knowledge and experience of other technical editors.

Desktop Publishing

With creation and spread of the World Wide Web and the proliferation of computers, desktop publishing became more widespread. However, Rude and Smith (1992) found that very little software had been designed for editing someone else's work. By 1995, the editor's tools were WordPerfect, MS Word, FrameMaker, and similar applications. Other tools available were online dictionaries, encyclopedias, style manuals, reference works, and online archives. The discussion group, Copyediting-L was formed in 1992 for "editors and other defenders of the English language who want to talk about anything related to editing" (copyediting-l.info).

Technical editors began to use evidence from research to explain specific edits. Research gave insight into the cognitive strategies of the editing process and why editors can use the "knowledge base stored in their memory" (Warren, 2010) to justify edits. Higher education began to offer courses in technical editing. However, textbooks specifically to teach technical editing did not exist.

At least, writing and editing were acknowledged to be separate activities that require different skills: "Editors were seen as professionals who are highly skilled, not only in language, but also in communication…skillful in helping authors achieve their communication goals" (Warren, 2010).

Communication Technology Revolution: XML and DITA

In 1996, the World Wide Web Consortium (WC3) published a working draft memo on extensible markup language (XML). Sheehan-Johnson wrote in his 1997 introduction to *The Evolution of Technical Editing*, the "Discipline of technical editing is evolving rapidly as our editorial methods and tools change. We now find ourselves in a much more complex editorial environment, as new media—such as hypertext, intranets, and multimedia—call for our attention." Malone (2020) termed these changes "revolutionary developments in communication technologies and practices."

These advancements in media types broadened the scope of content products that editors worked on: "Digital publishing environments spawned new genres, such as the help system, website, podcast, video demonstration, and wiki-based documentation. Editors [could] prepare docs for multiple outputs with emphasis on reduction of content" (Malone, 2020).

Online chat or email groups continued to provide community and access to first-hand knowledge and experience of other technical editors. STC programs provided another means of knowledge transfer. Web-based tools such as online forums, social networks, and the Google Suite enabled quick discussion and collaboration.

In 2001, IBM unveiled DITA for structured authoring. IBM editors noted in 2007, "this new focus on DITA elements and technology has recreated the role of the tech editor in the age of topic-based authoring" (Malone). However, DITA has not proven to have such a wide-reaching impact. Editors continued to use tools like Word, Acrobat, and Google Docs for collaborative markup.

In 2009, the category of Technical Writers was added to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook Handbook (OOH), lending credence to the technical communication profession. It seems a given that technical writers had to develop and be recognized as a profession before technical editors could be. Does this pave the way for technical editors to be recognized?

Although the U.S. Government has had job titles of "Technical Writer/Editor" and "Technical Manual Writing/Editor" since World War II, "technical editor" is not listed among types of editors in the OOH. In their view it seems, "editor" is still associated with news reporting or traditional publishing. As of 2012, there were still no undergraduate degree programs in technical editing in the United States (Malone, 2020). Regardless, I'm hopeful and excited to hear what happens next in our story!

Back to the Past

Was journalism where technical editing started? Or was it with the subject-matter specialists who reviewed the mass of technical content produced in support of the Allies in World War II? It's probably safe to accept that our earliest "amphibian ancestors" were mainly technical reviewers and editors of journalism in the heyday of the printing press. But it's well known that the profession and practice of technical communication including editing got its legs courtesy of the U.S. Government for the purpose of war.

Since mid-20th century, "major changes in editing parallel the transition of the world's economy from manufacturing based to service, technology, knowledge, and information based" (Malone, 2020). Sources call out the transition from manual and print production to the vast array of computerized components and aspects of publication as "the evolution" in technical editing. Today's technical editors are specialists in the methodology and practice of technical editing, versatile, and adaptable to new tools and subject matter. ■

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Read *STC's Notebook*

The official blog of the Society for Technical Communication, *STC's Notebook,* is your source for news and insight from the STC community.

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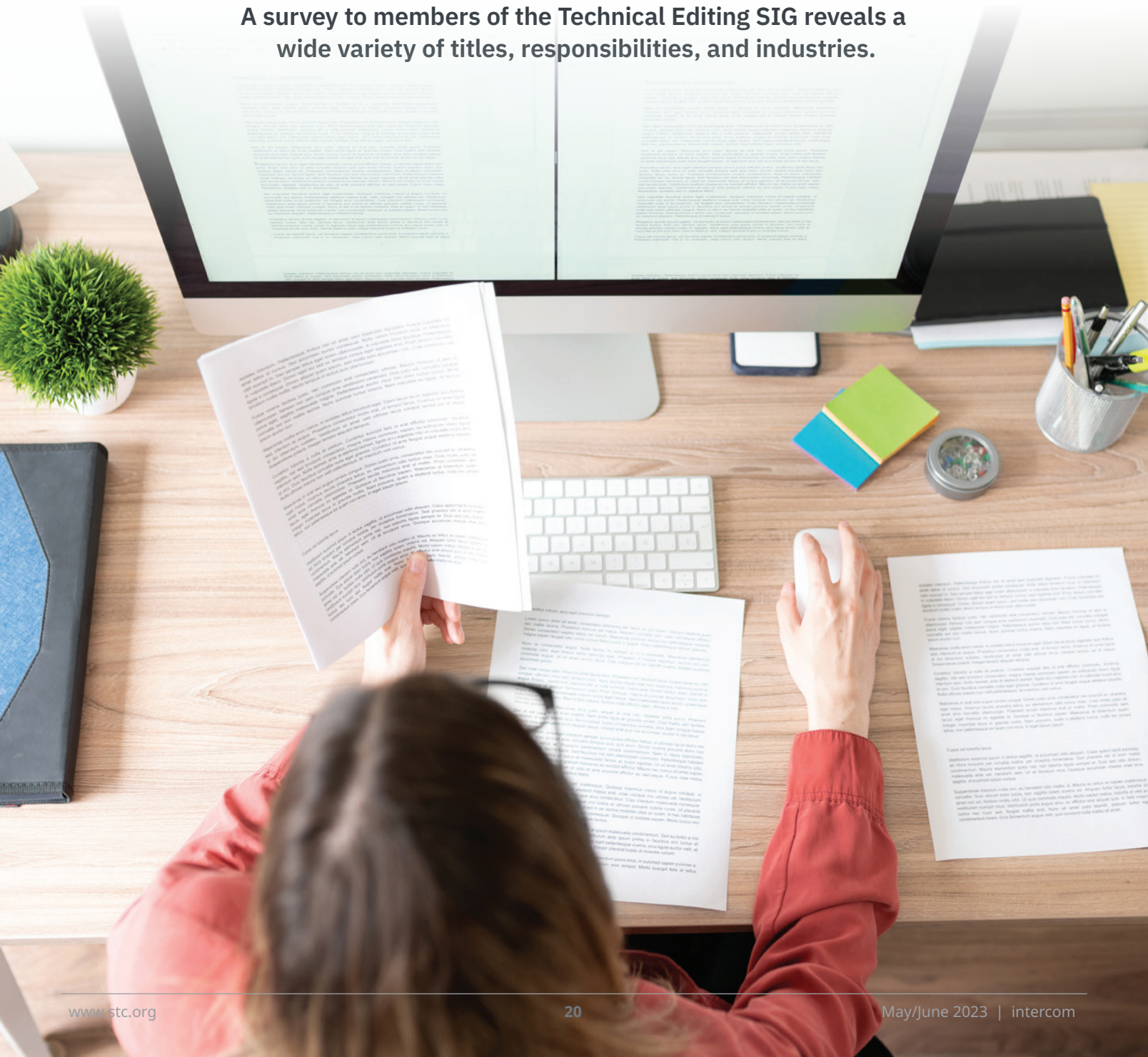
Send your submissions to *publications@stc.org*.

Technical Editing Today

By Kelly Schrank | Associate Fellow

A survey to members of the Technical Editing SIG reveals a wide variety of titles, responsibilities, and industries.



Getting a cohesive view of our profession is challenging. The umbrella of technical communication includes many types of work, from writers to editors to instructional designers to illustrators to managers. While the Technical Editing Special Interest Group (TESIG) has historically been one of the most populous and active in STC, that population doesn't necessarily represent people who ONLY act as technical editors in their functional roles, but technical communicators that also edit.

This is reflected in the makeup of the TESIG. The member list of the TESIG shows 206 members with a wide variety of titles. Of the 141 titles provided by members when they sign up or renew, 69 were technical writers, nine were a technical writer/editor combo, seven were managers, and ten were editors. Other popular titles were professors (4), students (13), directors (3), and business owners (6).

I sent a survey to members of the TESIG (Schrank, 2023) to discover their current practices in our profession. There were only 33 responses, and then I followed up with six more respondents for an in-depth conversation. While this was only a small sampling, which may have also been confounded by non-members seeing and taking the survey when I posted to my social media, it was a broad swath of those identifying as technical editors or doing technical editing. Based on responses, it's obvious that many folks are not only technical editors. In fact, many folks only mentioned writing, saying they were the sole technical writer, or listing many documentation deliverables.

Many respondents mix these two types of work: 7 considered themselves writers/editors, with one being a project manager/editor. One such writer/editor interviewed for her job as a writer, but then was hired as an editor because of her interest and experience, but now that she's been there, she finds herself acting as a writer on some projects because of layoffs. She believes you need to be well-rounded and flexible to stay employed, and she doesn't want to limit herself or her career options by just being an editor.

The number of writers in the TESIG may be related to a change in the work of technical communicators. In the Introduction to *Technical Editing*, the editor's note states: "The editing of existing content is edging out the authoring of original content as the main activity of technical communicators." (Cunningham, Malone and Rothschild, 2020)

Given how many job ads ask for specific software skills for technical communicators, it was surprising that almost half of those surveyed said they edited in Word. The rest were an interesting mix, with the somewhat popular PDF, Excel, and PowerPoint each being mentioned multiple times. Other respondents seem to edit in a multitude of environments, so any of those already mentioned, but then also test environments, online tools, Confluence, FrameMaker, Flare, InDesign, Illustrator, Paint, Google docs, and even paper (though some mentioned in comments that it was a way to see the text differently than on screen, and that they would still need to transcribe edits into electronic files). This dichotomy of Word versus everything else was confirmed in a focus group/study by Clinton R. Lanier, who attempted to find out what types of technologies should be taught in technical editing classrooms. He found that Word was most commonly noted, but "there is not, nor will there ever be a single technology used in technical editing." (Lanier, 2019)

He found that Word was most commonly noted, but "there is not, nor will there ever be a single technology used in technical editing." (Lanier, 2019)

Many new technologies may be needed by editors just to do their jobs. Two noted that their work comes through JIRA tickets, while others said they are assigned or offered work via shared drives or websites, with email notifications or requests. Many editors find themselves needing to know a little bit about everything: "visual literacy…interaction design… software applications (help authoring, image editing, database management), markup language, and online collaboration tools and social media." (Cunningham, Malone and Rothschild, 2020)

When asked separately about their editing tools, 49% use checklists, 55% use specific software, 25% use macros, and almost 30% said *other*, which contained a variety of tools, from online style guides, to Grammarly, to Google.

When asked who they work with on a daily basis, the numbers are more in line with expectations: 75% of respondents work with subject matter experts (SMEs) on a daily basis, while others work with technical writers, managers, project managers, trainers, business analysts, and stakeholders.

When asked who they work with on a daily basis, the numbers are more in line with expectations: 75% of respondents work with subject matter experts (SMEs) on a daily basis, while others work with technical writers, managers, project managers, trainers, business analysts, and stakeholders.

When asked what industry they are in, there seemed to be few overlaps in this small sample (33 surveys total). The two most common were healthcare (6), with industries listed as biomedical, medical devices, and biopharmaceutical, and software/hardware/IT (6), described as software development, IT, and cybersecurity. There were two in oil and gas, two in accounting/finance and banking, three in manufacturing, and three in government. And the rest were unique, sometimes because they were the only one to respond like that and sometimes because they were just too generic to be categorized: education, proposals, English language services, scientific and professional services, consulting, energy, academia, and civil engineering and professional services.

When given a broad question, like, *How do they fit into the company?,* some people's jobs became more clear. In line with the audience for this survey, 12 mentioned only editing (including formatting and quality, but not writing). Of those I talked to, only one technical editor has what has been traditionally considered a typical editing position, where he is the technical editor for a team of technical writers with a tech comm manager leading the team. Two technical editors are on teams of editors (one large, two small) who edit the work of SMEs in industries as diverse as environmental, toxicology, and research grants.

And how is the job market? A recent search on LinkedIn brought up 11 results for "technical editor" with "remote" as the location; a similar search (without the quotes) brought up 342 results, with many of these being technical writer or technical writer/editor combos (in full disclosure, by page 12 of 14 pages of results, the jobs are more *technical* than *writer* or *editor*). Indeed had similar results, 12 jobs for "technical editor" and 286 jobs for technical editor, which had many technical writer/editor combos.

Talking to technical editors throughout the years, I often hear that you need to be open to writing or completing other types of tasks in order to stay busy in a full-time position, or even as a freelancer. Given that a typical editor can edit the work of 7-20+ writers (though I often hear 1:12 is the optimal ratio), the demand for technical editors is much less than that for technical writers, but that doesn't mean they are not necessary or sought after in industry. ■

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Once in a Lifetime

BY TIMOTHY ESPOSITO | *STC President*

You may find yourself editing a large DITA document, and you may ask yourself, "How do I work this?" And now you may find yourself as the President of the Society for Technical Communication, and you may ask yourself, "How did I get here?" Well, for me, the answer is not as straightforward as you may think; it involved a lot of attempts, many of which failed, before achieving success.

Every technical communicator has a story about how they found their niche in the workforce. My tech writing career began in college when they rolled out a new email service and asked me to write instructions on how to use it. So, I wrote up some steps, added a personal copyright in the footer, and submitted it to the IT department. Shortly thereafter, my instructions were being handed out (sadly without my copyright) to both students and professors alike. While it took a few years for my career to catch up, when it did, tech writing was a natural fit.

Soon after becoming a full-time technical communicator, my manager suggested I join STC. I attended a few local meetings of the Philadelphia Metro Chapter and signed up. Almost immediately the chapter sought to get me involved. First, they suggested I run for chapter president (I lost), and then they had me set up a chapter scholarship program, a process which helped me later re-establish STC's student scholarship. After a few years of being chapter treasurer, I ran for the role of STC treasurer and lost to Jim Bousquet, who honestly was a better treasurer than I would have ever been. Then I was passed over by the Nominating Committee no less than 3 times. So, I chaired a few awards committees for the next couple of years before running for society secretary, and then VP and president; and here I am now the new STC president.

Did all these failures and successes make me a better presidential candidate? Did they give me what it takes to be a leader for our Society? Well, what they did give me was insight into how STC works, and how the passionate members, volunteers, and staff want the Society to grow and thrive. It gave me the courage to step out of my introverted tendencies and lead a group. Personally, I would love for all of you to consider becoming more involved with the Society; do not be afraid of risk and failure! Challenges will only make you a stronger person and increase your visibility in the job market, as well as open connections within our community.

For the next few years, STC will face some great challenges itself. We said goodbye to our longtime, dedicated CEO Liz Pohland. However, as they say, every time a door is closed, another one opens. STC is already researching new CEO and association management options. This will also mean changes in the Society; maybe what worked 20 years ago isn't a good model in today's culture. Our Annual Business Meeting and Leadership Programs have already moved to being virtual events so we can include more members, for example. What other changes would you like to see happen? A new model for membership? A new structure for communities? What do you think STC needs to do to meet the needs of you and your communities? Let the board know by sending a note to board@stc.org.

STC and You

As you let the days go by, pause and consider where you and STC are going. While STC could be the same as it ever was, consider – how can it be better for not just you, but for everyone in the Society? Technical communicators are a diverse group with diverse skills. How can you and STC help each other achieve greatness and find your beautiful house, meet your beautiful spouse, and get behind the wheel of that large automobile? ■

TIMOTHY ESPOSITO (tmesposit.stc@gmail.com) is the 2023-24 president of STC. His ongoing column will keep you updated on STC's direction, and be filled with fun cultural references such as https://youtu.be/5IsSpAOD6K8.

STC Honors and Award Recipients

STC recognizes excellence in technical communication and outstanding service to the Society with its honors, awards, and competitions programs.

- Individuals are honored for their contributions to the profession via speaking, teaching, mentoring, writing, and research, as well as their service and dedication to the Society and their communities.
- Communities are recognized for their contributions to the Society's goal of providing high-quality programming, resources, and networking opportunities for technical communicators all over the world.

Honors, awards, and recognitions are given at the Honors Event at the annual STC Summit, along with at the Leadership Program.

Honors and Awards

Lifetime Achievement Award for Excellence in Service

Jackie Damrau

President's Award

Nicky Bleiel

Jane Wilson

Honorary Fellow

Andrew Lawless

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Elizabeth Fraley

Kim Rosenlof

Elizabeth Herman

Tricia Spayer

Associate Fellows

Lisa Adair

Christina Mayr

James Bousquet

Roger Renteria

Alex Garcia

Sean Stevenson

Linda Kelley

Jay R. Gould Award for Excellence in Teaching Technical Communication

Lee-Ann Breuch, University of Minnesota

TECHNICAL COMMUNICATION 2023 SUMMIT CONFERENCE & EXPO

Ken Rainey Award for Excellence in Research

Miriam Williams,
Texas State University

Intercom Outstanding

Magazine Article

Jack Molisani

Intercom Outstanding Guest-Edited Issue

Jackie Damrau and
Elizabeth Herman

Frank R. Smith Award

for Outstanding Journal Article

Nora K. Rivera

for Distinguished Journal Article

Daniel Hocutt, Nupoor Ranade, and Gustav Verhulsdonck

Sigma Tau Chi

Rachel Dick,
Michigan Technological University

Community Achievement Awards

Community of the Year Award

Chicago Chapter

Most Improved Community Award

North Texas Lone Star Chapter
Ohio Chapter

Platinum Communities

Carolina Chapter
Chicago Chapter
Instructional Design & Learning SIG
Michigan Great Lakes Chapter
North Texas Lone Star Chapter
Washington DC - Baltimore Chapter

Gold Communities

Ohio Chapter

Bronze Communities

Rochester Chapter
South Central Texas Chapter
Technical Editing SIG

Pacesetters

Carolina Chapter
Chicago Chapter
Instructional Design & Learning SIG
North Texas Lone Star Chapter
Policies & Procedures SIG
Technical Editing SIG
Washington DC - Baltimore Chapter

Distinguished Chapter Service Award

Michigan Great Lakes Chapter—Katherine Baeckeroot
North Texas Lone Star Chapter—Zohra Mutabanna
Ohio Chapter—Kelly Webb Bronstrup
Twin Cities Chapter—Laura Harding
Washington DC - Baltimore Chapter—Tavia Record ■

EDI in Technical Communication Discourse: Truing the Rule

BY THOMAS BARKER | *Fellow*

The Academic Conversation is dedicated to clarifying issues facing technical communicators in university settings. Lately those settings have come under critical scrutiny for their commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI, also known as diversity, equity, and inclusion or DEI. In this article I use EDI). According to *The Heritage Foundation*, EDI initiatives are a bloat in the academy. Foundation spokespersons raise the alarm claiming that EDI programs divert university resources, turning universities and professors away from their true teaching and research path. Others make arguments for EDI initiatives under the warrant that universities must become places of inclusion for all.

Amidst this controversy, it is not easy for the average person to understand let alone judge. A clear, unalarmed eye in the judge is what is needed. As Aristotle once famously said, "It is not right to pervert the judge by moving him to anger or envy or pity--one might as well warp a carpenter's rule before using it." In this article I hope to *true the rule* for those who judge these EDI efforts.

Universities are our public, collective responsibility. How they are run is the purview of all people. For this reason, these claims deserve to be addressed. Are our universities off track in pursuing EDI goals? What can technical communication professors do to make sure they are serving all the public in the important work of helping citizens shape technology to human ends?

These important questions take center stage in this month's column. I hope to show that those who claim that universities have run amuck with EDI, are missing the point. Also, technical communication practitioners can look to their scholarly traditions to guide them. Indeed, by looking at the kinds of arguments being made in technical communication scholarship, we can *true the rule* when it comes to evaluating university EDI initiatives.

We start by examining the arguments against EDI that claim it is not a valid direction for faculty, staff and students. Next, we examine what technical communication scholars assert as the purview of EDI, putting it into the context of trends in higher education. Finally, we look at how professors can true the rule *for critics by encouraging even more EDI initiatives.*

The Arguments Made Against EDI

A number of conservative think tanks, like the Heritage Foundation and the Manhattan Institute, have been focusing on issues in higher education. The Manhattan Institute defines EDI in the following way:

> Any effort to promote as the official position of the administration, the college, the university, or any administrative unit thereof, a particular, widely

> contested opinion referencing unconscious or implicit bias, cultural appropriation, allyship, transgender ideology, microaggressions, group marginalization, anti-racism, systemic oppression, social justice, intersectionality, neo-pronouns, heteronormativity, disparate impact, gender theory, racial or sexual privilege, or any related formulation of these concepts.

The effort that these writers refer to consists of work by staff and administrative units who choose to use or are charged with using equity, diversity and inclusion principles to shape the university environment. The number of persons committed to this effort appears to these critics to be disproportionately large.

Writers for the Heritage Foundation look at universities and see EDI (they call it DEI) bureaucracies in higher education. From the 65 university websites they scanned, they cite nearly 3,000 people as having DEI responsibilities. Writers Jay P. Greene and James D. Paul make their case in this way:

> DEI bureaucracies appear to increase administrative bloat without contributing to the stated goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Employing dozens of DEI professionals—in the form of chief diversity officers, assistant deans for diversity, and directors for inclusive excellence—may be better understood as jobs programs subsidizing political activism without improving campus climate. In light of these findings, state legislators and donors who fund these institutions may wish to examine DEI efforts more closely to ensure that university resources are used effectively.

Here we see how these writers encourage critiques of university effectiveness, warping the rule of those whose role it is to judge these institutions.

> Legislators, boards of trustees, tuition-paying parents, donors, and other stakeholders can demand that universities produce evidence that their enormous devotion of resources to hiring DEI staff have been effective.

A demand for evidence of effectiveness is a legitimate request, especially where observers can look for measures of diversity, and numbers and responses of students from diverse backgrounds. Says the Manhattan Institute, "There is no reliable evidence to support the view that large DEI offices have a positive impact on minority students' sense of belonging."

To summarize, the argument in the Manhattan Institute article calls for "Colorblind Equality" that is based on assumptions of the abridgement of individual rights, and citations of legal precedent to encourage the push-back of people in the form of lawsuits.

The Argument Made For EDI

Technical communication academics who feel the need to address these critiques need look no further than scholarship in technical communication to see the bigger picture of EDI in their institutions. And then *true the rule* for those who critique this trend.

In reference to this trend, Jennifer Bay (2022), points out the importance of an infrastructure in higher education. In her research assignments she asks students to look to EDI practices in business and government as well as the university. Such a purview highlights an important point about university EDI work: it requires the building of an infrastructure. But what exactly does that mean?

Building an infrastructure means baking issues into all aspects of an institution. In Canada, for example, universities grapple with issues of Indigenous rights, responding to the experience of Indigenous persons (an important population in Canada). What researchers Gaudry and Lorenz found was that change requires an infrastructure. Some call it an *environment*. This experience shows us that what is good for equity-denied persons may be good for all. When you design with diversity as a goal, the benefits reach all. It's like the canary in the coal mine: if the canary can breathe then everyone can breathe.

EDI work in universities, thus, takes on the scope of environmental transformation, looking for collective, fundamental changes rather than localized or individualized rights, the pursuit of which, some might claim, mainly enrich lawyers. The term for this environmental and socially relational

kind of change that we see the technical communication and other scholarship is "social justice." Researcher Natasha Jones, sees

> ...productive connections between technical communication and composition studies scholars seeking to re-frame and re-story the work of writing studies as a broader discipline, particularly scholars who are committed to more equitable, more accessible, more inclusive, and more socially just classrooms, academic organizations, and institutional programs.

Researchers Bennett and Hannah take the case further, noting that professors need to learn how to *true the rule* with their critics by pointing out the dynamics of system and infrastructure change in EDI. In the Table 1 I have laid out the differences between the arguments for and against EDI.

To answer our earlier question, universities are on track to remake themselves into more ethical institutions. But they change slowly. Why is that? Because, unlike many industries, they are comprised of critical, productive individuals for whom ideology and social responsibility make a difference. Universities are not blown about by popular trends. Higher education is the iceberg, not the ship. The justice goal of EDI seeks to change the environment, not the individual. Similarly, EDI is not a movement. Many responsible administrators identify with EDI work? Just a start if the goal is access with equity.

The work of equity, diversity and inclusion does not need an army or a bureaucracy; it needs voices, examples, mentorship, teaching, and engagement. These relationships elude customary outcomes measurement. Critiques of EDI efforts are welcome components of authentic, ethical change, but their influence must be resolved. Bennett and Hannah offer guidelines for how to *true the rule* in this way:

> Ultimately, we hope that these guidelines help [technical and professional communicators] pursue ethical engagements that shift rights-based discourse within the workplace toward more robust understandings of access as a frictional, complex matter of social justice.

If we look again to Aristotle, the philosopher points out that in matters of justice, the law can only go so far.

> As to whether a thing is important or unimportant, just or unjust, the judge must surely refuse to take his instructions from the litigants: he must decide for himself all such points as the law-giver has not already defined for him.
> Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*

We are all judges and all judged. In conversations about

Table 1: Arguments Made for and Against EDI

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion[1]	Colorblind Equality[2]
justice-based	rights-based
collective focus	individual focus
social responsibility	individual responsibility
ethical framework	legal framework
environmental transformation	personal adaptation
informed by history	informed by law
intersectional approach	single-issue approach

1 *Bennett, Kristin C., and Mark A. Hannah. "Transforming the rights-based encounter: Disability rights, disability justice, and the ethics of access."* Journal of Business and Technical Communication *36.3 (2022): 326-354.*

2 *Rufo, Christopher F., Ilya Shapiro and Matt Beienburg. "Abolish DEI Bureaucracies and Restore Colorblind Equality in Public Universities."* Manhattan Institute Issue Brief*: January 13, 2023.*

Guidelines for *Truing the Rule* (adapted from Bennett and Hannah)

- Reframe EDI as a collective endeavor
- Move the discussion from "equality" to "equity"
- Frame EDI leadership as productivity
- Exchange standard notions of *minorities* with considerations of *difference*
- Recognize the connections among marginalized identities

decision-making at the university, academic technical communicators, myself included, are being called on to understand and account for the policies that drive our work. Thankfully, technical communication scholars have worked out artful communicative approaches to *true the rule* when the law falls short. ■

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Spotlight on the Technical Editing Special Interest Group (TESIG)

The Technical Editing Special Interest Group (TESIG) is one of the largest SIGs in the STC, with a long history of educational programs and social activities for people interested in the field of technical editing.

According to Yoel Strimling, TESIG Manager, "our goals are to give our members high-quality information about editing processes and best practices, enable professional development and networking opportunities, and provide resources that they can use to prove the value of editing."

So how do we meet these goals?

EdEx Mini-Conference

In 2022, we launched the Editors' Exchange (EdEx), an annual half-day virtual mini-conference, to provide technical editing practitioners the opportunity to hear other professionals in the field discuss an aspect of each of the TESIG's goals.

- The first session focuses on current issues in technical editing.
- The second session presents information that demonstrates the importance/value of technical editing and editors to employers and companies.
- The third session is a forum for new voices in technical editing and offers guidance to technical editing students.

Feedback for EdEx22 was very positive – one attendee said, "Overall, this was one of the most engaging virtual events I've attended. I appreciate everyone's expertise, but even more their warmth and authenticity."

To purchase a recording of EdEx22, go to https://www.eventbrite.com/e/stc-tesig-editors-exchange-2022-mini-conference-recording-tickets-469831738377.

EdEx23 will be on Tuesday, November 14, 2023. Session descriptions and information about presenters will be available at http://www.stc-techedit.org/editors-exchange-mini-conferences/. The conference is open to everyone, with different registration prices for TESIG members, STC members who are not (yet) TESIG members, and non-members.

Beginning in 2023, EdEx attendees will earn two continuing education units toward maintaining Certified Professional Technical Communicator (CPTC) certification.

Student Outreach

One of the main goals of the TESIG is to help technical editing students get more involved in the field. We want to hear some new, fresh voices, especially from those who are studying the subject or just starting out professionally. It is important for us to discuss the needs, dreams, and issues of the next generation of technical editing practitioners. In 2023, we launched two student-centric programs: a monthly virtual chat series and a mentorship program.

Virtual Chat Series

The TESIG hosts monthly virtual chat sessions for current STC and TESIG student members to discuss editing challenges and share helpful resources, editing tactics and tips, and career advice about finding internships or jobs. The chat sessions are moderated by student and new graduate volunteers, so the conversations are fully student-driven.

Mentorship Program

The mentorship program is only available to TESIG student members at this time. Students who express interest will be paired with TESIG mentors who have more than 10 years of experience in technical editing. Potential mentees can select areas of interest, such as advice on continuing education and certification, portfolio reviews, and recommendations for resumes or LinkedIn profiles.

If you are interested in learning more about these programs or volunteering, please email student_outreach@stc-techedit.org.

Webinars

The TESIG presents quarterly webinars that are open to both members and non-members. They are free for members and available at a small charge for non-members. The webinars are recorded, and the recordings, slides, and handouts are available for six months to a year afterwards.

To learn about upcoming webinars or purchase a recording, go to https://stc-techedit.org/tesig-webinars/.

Corrigo

Corrigo is the official publication of the TESIG and provides useful information on advocating for readers.

You can submit short (1,000 words or less) original content about subjects you think technical editing practitioners might find interesting:

- Stories about how applying technical editing skills increases reader satisfaction
- Information about tools you find helpful
- Hacks that you use to make your job easier
- Tips about how to balance quality and deadlines
- Vignettes about a day in your life as a technical editing practitioner
- Links to sites you find helpful in your job, with explanations about how they help you
- Reviews of articles, books, or events you have read or attended that relate to technical editing

To see the latest articles, go to http://corrigo.stc-techedit.org.

To submit an article for publication, go to http://corrigo.stc-techedit.org/about-corrigo/#submissions

#TechEditNoJoke

Technical editing is no joke! But even so, we have to see the humorous side of things – there are so many funny examples of what happens when editors are left out altogether (or, gulp, when we fail to catch a mistake)!

The TESIG runs an ongoing contest for funny personal editing stories and good editing jokes. To submit one of yours, go to https://stc-techedit.org/technical-editing-is-no-joke/.

How to Join the TESIG

Take advantage of all that the TESIG has to offer. After all, we need your help to do all of this!

If you are a TESIG member, please consider volunteering some of your time and expertise; send an email to sigleaders@stc-techedit.org.

If you are an STC member, but not yet a TESIG member, contact STC membership at +1 (703) 522-4114 with payment information and your community selection to update your membership. Gold membership includes access to all SIGs, but you have to opt into which SIGs you want to join. You can add the TESIG to your STC membership at any time during the year; you do not need to wait for the renewal period.

For more information about the TESIG, go to our website, https://stc-techedit.org/. ■

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